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RESERVE

I've written;—but what ached to be expressed
Lies where it lay, untold. I may not reach
His mind through that hard barrier, unconfessed
Between us, made more adamant by speech;
Yet we are kindred—not alone in blood,
But in affinity of mind and mood.

I think that running water is a bliss
To his imagination, as to mine;
I know the poets he would sadliest miss,
The music that exalts his soul, like wine.
Our wildest hopes, our passions are the same;—
We praise together and together blame.

Yet, if our eyes encounter,— how they start
With a strange fear and bashfulness before
Each other's message! Hands oft fall apart
Awkwardly from their pressure, shamed and sore,
Because the tenderness of heart beneath
Rebelliously has broken through its sheath!

What fate has doomed us to this loneliness
That is not apathy, nor disesteem,
Nor self-absorption, nor suspicious sense
Each of the other? It is like some dream
Wherein we impotently lie, nor see
Nor question cause of our weird misery.

And oft to mask our pain, or to deceive
Ourselves, we say: "The Englishman is proud,
And does not 'wear his heart upon his sleeve
For daws to peck at', nor proclaim aloud
Soul-secrets." Then our eyes fall. Well we know
That isolation is supremest woe.

MARGARETTA B. BYRDE.

London, England.